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ADDRESS BY THE HON. HERBERT HOOVER

Honorary Chairman

Famine Emergency Committee

under the committee's auspices

Sherman Hotel, Chicago, Illinois

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THE
FEDERAL
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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

REPORT OF THE

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This is my report to the American people upon the world famine situation. Three weeks ago I broadcasted from Cairo our report upon the situation in Europe. Since then we have examined the food problems in Egypt, Iraq, India, Siam, the Philippines, China, Korea and Japan, thus compassing most of Asia.

I can therefore now consolidate our findings in twenty-five countries which we visited and upon several more upon which we have received competent information.

At the request of President Truman I have acted as a sort of Food Ambassador to determine needs; to discover possible further sources of supplies; and to coordinate the world's effort to master this danger to the lives of millions. Beyond this, it has been my duty to represent the solicitude of the American people and their desire to aid.

Along the 35,000 miles we have traveled, I have seen with my own eyes the grimmest spectre of famine in all the history of the world.

Of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the one named War has gone - at least for a while. But Famine, Pestilence and Death are still charging over the earth. And the modern world has added four more to this evil brigade. Their names are Destruction, Drought, Fear and Revolution. This crisis is not alone due to war destruction of agriculture. On the top of that calamity has been piled drought in the Mediterranean, drought in India, drought in China and partial drought in South Africa and the Argentine. Never have so many evil Horsemen come all at one time.

Hunger hangs over the homes of more than 800,000,000 people - over one-third of the people of the earth. Hunger is a silent visitor who comes like a shadow. He sits beside every anxious mother three times each day. He brings not alone suffering and sorrow, but fear and

terror. He carries disorder and the paralysis of government, and even its downfall. He is more destructive than armies, not only in human life but in morals. All of the values of right living melt before his invasions, and every gain of civilization crumbles. But we can save these people from the worst, if we will.

In our Mission through Europe, I have had the devoted cooperation of my six colleagues, all of them with long experience in famines. We secured independent investigations in advance of coming; we consulted at length with the heads of state and with the food and agricultural experts of each government; we checked and cross-checked all information with American officials in those countries; we have checked it again with the Relief organizations of many nationalities who are working closely with the stricken peoples. And above all, my colleagues and I have gone into the byways to see for ourselves. I am confident our conclusions are close to reality.

On this journey I have seen much which I could criticize as to the management of the famine relief. I criticized such matters to many officials in the world frankly. I could criticize them bitterly. But, after every boiling of inward indignation at men and at nations, I come back again and again to the fact that millions are in grave danger of starvation. To explode into public criticism in this crisis would only weaken the amount of support and diminish the food they will receive. Criticism can wait for history. I only want to record that all has not been perfect in the world that I have witnessed. It all adds emphasis to the fact that today the vital need is unity and cooperation now, so that we may master this crisis.

In appraising the world situation, I could give you reams of figures of rations, of calories, of tons of this and that, for every country and each district. I could give you their stocks of food on

hand, in transit, and the further need of each famine area. I could give it by the month, or for the crisis. I could give the time required for ship transport with details of port, railroad and truck capacities for distribution. This sort of detailed information would convey little to you, but it is full of meaning in the lives of men, women and children to my colleagues and myself. For in these figures lurks the certainty of hunger to hundreds of millions, and even the spectre of mass starvation before this crisis is passed. Rather than such details, time requires that I give you a global picture, in the hope that it will convey to you the gravity of the situation, and the need for our utmost further effort.

I have said before that calories are the yardstick of hunger, of starvation, of famine, and finally death. And I may remind you that an average of 2,200 calories per person per day is the minimum in a nation for healthy human beings. And do remember that we Americans, the British, the Canadians, the Australians, the Swedes, the Argentinians, and most of the Western Hemisphere are consuming over 2,900 calories per day right now. If these 800,000,000 people should receive no more relief, and if we assume that their own remaining resources could be evenly distributed, which they could not, the measure of their hunger with the caloric yardstick is about as follows:

About 100,000,000 people would be reduced to the 2,000 calory level.

About 100,000,000 more people would be reduced to an 1,800 calory level.

About 150,000,000 more would be reduced to an 1,500 calory level.

About 150,000,000 more would be reduced to an 1,200 calory level; and

About 300,000,000 more would be reduced to an 900 calory level, or below - and that is slow death.

As we descend this scale, we move step by step from the stage of hunger to the stage of disease and epidemics, to the stage of public disorder, to the stage of starvation of all but the strongest, and, finally, at less than 900 calories we come to mass starvation. The Nazis at Buchenwald and Belsen gave almost that amount to their prisoners. But long before a population is reduced to these lower levels, government would break down.

All this sounds like an engineering formula. It is; but it is a formula which means life and hope to nations. At the best we can do, it means knawing hunger to millions, but it is not mass starvation.

We must prevent the descent to these lower levels. Reconstruction and peace in the world would go up in the flames of chaos if we fail.

The transcendent question is the available overseas supplies with which to fulfill this formula. And I shall discuss breadstuffs only, for they are the symbols of life and hope. The problem of fats is no less urgent, but I will not burden your memories with more figures than necessary. And in breadstuffs I include all human food cereals that are available.

We have two sources of breadstuffs supply for this crisis - the residues of the 1945 harvest in the surplus countries, and the earlier part of the coming harvests of 1946. The harvest of some countries comes in June, others as late as October, and some supplies from the new harvest can be available to the countries of late harvests. If the present harvest prospects continue favorable, relief will come to the world within a few months. By September new supplies should be available and the immediate crisis will ease.

In March last, the Combined Food Board in Washington made an estimate of the amount of food needed by all the deficit nations for the first six months of 1946, and of supplies available from the

food-surplus nations. These estimates of need were based upon the requirements as stated by the nations who must have overseas supplies. Adding in estimates of the need between June and the fall harvest, the total requirements of cereals were listed at, roughly, 26,000,000 tons. For the same period supplies were estimated at 15,000,000 tons. Thus, there was an unbridgeable gap of 11,000,000 tons, or nearly 43 percent. And that would be a calory level below human endurance. That gap of 11,000,000 tons spells death to millions.

During these past months shipments have been moving, and mass starvation has so far been prevented. Our Mission examined the stocks now in the hands of each country and the amounts of their own production that could be expected. We measured the needs of each nation on a drastic caloric basis such as would pull them through, would prevent mass starvation, would maintain order and economic life. We kept the 1,500-1,800 calory bedrock figure always in mind. Most of the nations we visited joined earnestly with us in working out the very minimum they could do with, as they all realize the desperation of other nations.

The net of these drastic revisions was to reduce the total world requirements of breadstuffs by about 4,000,000 tons. By developing some new sources, by substitution of other cereals, by shifting between early and late harvests, by our sacrifices in America and by spreading sacrifice into other surplus areas, we estimate supplies for the hungry will be increased by a minimum of about 3,000,000 tons. Thus, the gap has been decreased from 11,000,000 tons to 3,600,000 tons. But the gap is still there - and it is a tragic gap.

I can illustrate how tragic that gap still is. It equals the whole amount necessary to save 40,000,000 people. We would, of course, not concentrate the shortage on one nation but if we spread it over

all, the results are about the same. There are Americans who believe, it right, and a duty, to feed women and children even of a surrendered enemy. No one is the enemy of children. There are others who believe that the only hope of a peaceful world is to save the enemy peoples from starvation and thus start building them into peaceful, cooperative peoples. There are others who, remembering the immeasurable crimes the enemy has committed against all mankind, believe in "an eye for an eye", a "tooth for a tooth". To these, let me say that to keep five hundred thousand American boys in garrison among starving women and children is unthinkable. It is impossible because, being Americans, they will share their own rations with hungry children; it is impossible because hunger brings the total destruction of all morals; it is impossible because of the danger to American boys of sweeping infectious diseases, which rise from famine. It is unthinkable because we do not want our boys machine-gunning famished rioters. It is unthinkable because we do not want the American flag flying over nation-wide Buchenwalds.

And what of the children in Europe?

This 1,500 calory bottom level is dreadfully hard on children. It is hard because a larger portion of the average ration must go to heavy workers if essential services be kept going. While this diet, which is as much as 85 percent bread and the balance a little fat, sugar and vegetables, will pull adults through, it is not adapted to children. Several nations give them priority in what little dairy supplies there are; extra food is given in some schools; and the charitable agencies are doing the best they can. But in all, they are touching only the fringe of the problem. The proof of this is an annual infant mortality rate as high as 200 per 1000 among children under one year in many cities. The further proof is that there are

somewhere from 20 to 30 million physically subnormal children on the Continent. After the war in 1919-1920, we gave a good extra meal a day, of 500 or 600 calories of restorative food, to 10,000,000 children. I deplore that this special aid for children has had no counterpart through a wide-spread organization set-up after this war. Civilization marches forward upon the feet of healthy children. It is not too late to stop this most costly retreat and its debacle of endless evil.

Much the same could be said of tens of millions of children in Asia. There many millions of these children have been falling far short of full life since long before this famine. And they are harder to reach and help, because of age-old rooted customs.

Our Mission has stimulated some action for children, both in Europe and Asia. I have already proposed not alone a systematic handling of this problem of sub-normal children, but a drastic reorganization of the world's food administration for the next harvest year. It is a primary job for the United Nations Organization if peace and good-will are to be re-established on earth.

UNRRA, with its earnest staff, attends to about twenty percent of the world's food needs. Their supply is by charity, of which the vast majority comes from America. But great as this work is, 80 percent of the problem is not charity - it is the furnishing of supplies which people can buy, yet they are just as hungry as the destitute.

Before closing, I should pay tribute to my colleagues on this journey, and to the great army of men and women in every nation over the world who are working unceasingly to save these millions of lives. The volunteer organizations of the religious bodies, of the Red Cross of many nations, are in the field, unceasingly doing their best - but they can remedy only a fraction of the suffering.

There are some hopes of further decreasing this gap of 3,600,000 tons.

First: Still more intensive conservation of breadstuffs and fats in North America. Before I went on this journey, we asked the American people to reduce their consumption of wheat products to two pounds per week per person and to cut their purchases of fats by 20 percent. Hundreds of thousands of families have responded by cutting out wheat products all together. Public eating places in many cities have cooperated. I regret to say there are too many who have not cooperated with some hungry human being. I earnestly hope that every American will remember that an invisible guest sits with him at every meal.

Second: We have need that every farmer bring every grain of cereal to market.

We are seeking for still further cooperation in other nations. The Latin-American states have responded to our appeals and to those of Pope Pius XII for cooperation. At President Truman's request, I shall visit these governments to consult with them on measures of coordination of our efforts.

If we can succeed in persuading every man and woman, every nation to do their utmost, we shall master this famine. And we shall save the lives of hundreds of millions from the greatest jeopardy in all the history of mankind. We shall have saved infinite suffering.

I was asked by the President to undertake this work in a purely advisory capacity and with the further journey to the Latin-American states, my service ends. The responsibilities of administration of the programs I have outlined lie with our officials. I bespeak for them the full support of all Americans in their efforts to meet this terrible world crisis.

In conclusion, do I need to reinforce this report with more urging to do your utmost? I may repeat again what I said three weeks ago from Cairo: "If every source of supplies will do its utmost, we can pull the world through this most dangerous crisis. The saving of these human lives is far more than an economic necessity to the recovery of the world. It is more than the only path to order, to stability and to peace. Such action marks the return of the lamp of compassion to the earth. And that is a part of the moral and spiritual reconstruction of the world."

